

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 141262

EXDIS MIL ADDEES HANDLE AS SPEACT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT NOUAKCHOTT 1456 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
ABIDJAN, DAKAR, CAIRO, RABAT, LOME, BANGUI, MAPUTO, LIBREVILLE,
LAGOS, DAR ES SALAAM, YAOUNDE, GABORONE, NAIROBI, LUSAKA, KHARTOUM,
PARIS, BRUSSELS, LONDON, BONN, ROME, LISBON, THE HAGUE,
OTTAWA, MOSCOW, ALGIERS 02 M JUN UI

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1456

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS,MOPS, EFIN, EAID, CG, BE, MR

SUBJ: CONSULTATIONS ON RECOVERY EFFORT FOR ZAIRE

REF: STATE 137343

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1. ALTHOUGH WE SPEAK WITH LESS THAN FULL CONFIDENCE, WE
BELIEVE THAT,UNDER THE PROPER CIRCUMSTANCES, MAURITANIA
WOULD SUPPORT A SHABA PEACEKEEPING FORCE AND MIGHT BE WILLING
TO MAKE A TOKEN MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO IT. AS WE SEE
IT, THE CRUCIAL CONDITION WOULD BE THAT SUCH A FORCE ENJOY AT
A MINIMUM WIDE OAU SUPPORT AND PREFERABLE THAT IT BE FORMALLY

DESIGNATED AS AN OAU PEACEKEEPING CONTINGENT.

2. FORM A MILITARY STANDPOINT, THERE IS A PRECEDENT OF SORTS FOR SUCH A MOVE. LAST FALL, THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT WAS APPARENTLY WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE A BATTALION TO THE PROPOSED CEAO MUTUAL DEFENSE FORCE. ALSO, WITH THE WAR IN THE SAHARA GOING SOMEWHAT BETTER FROM THE MAURITANIAN STANDPOINT, THE ARMY MIGHT BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO SEND A SMALL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE TO ANOTHER PART OF THE CONTINENT.

3. POLITICALLY THERE ARE SEVERAL ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF MAURITANIAN PARTICIPATION. FIRST, THEIR TROOPS WOULD BE SEEN AS GOING TO THE AID OF A COUNTRY WHOSE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY WAS BEING THREATENED BY AN OUTSIDE FORCE. THE PARALLES WITH THE SAHARA SITUATION IS OBVIOUS. SECONDLY, WHILE THEY WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO SAY SO IN PUBLIC, THE MAURITANIANS WOULD FAVOR SUCH A PEACEKEEPING FORCE AS A COUNTER TO SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CONTINENT. FINALLY, THE NOTION OF AN AFRICAN SOLUTION TO AN AFRICAN PROBLEM WOULD BE APPEALING HERE.

4. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF NEGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS AS WELL. FIRST OF ALL, AS KING HASSAN POINTED OUT IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH KATHERINE GRAHAM (STATE 136208 NOTAL) A PEACHKEEPING FORCE BACKED ONLY BY "MODERATE" AFRICAN COUNTRIES COULD SERVE AS A PRECEDENT FOR A FUTURE "PROGRESSIVE" INTERVENTION IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CONTINENT, NOTABLE THE SAHARA. AN ALGERIAN-CONFIDENTIAL

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CUBAN "PEACEKEEPING" FORCE IN THIS REGION IS A SPECTER WHICH WE BELIEVE THE MAURITANIANS MUST HAVE CONTEMPLATED.

5. THERE ARE OTHER FOREIGN, DOMESTIC, AND MILITARY PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD ALSO MILITATE AGAINST MAURITANIAN PARTICIPATION. FIRST, AS A MINOR AFRICAN STATE, MAURITANIA TRIES NOT TO BE INVOLVED IN CONTROVERSY ON THE CONTINENT. THUS, WERE THE NEW PEACEKEEPING FORCE TO BE AS CONTROVERSIAL AS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE MOROCCAN INTERVENTION IN SHABA I, THE MAURITANIANS MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO BACK AWAY FROM SUPPORTING IT. FURTHER, AS WE POINTED OUT IN NOUAKCHOTT 1437 (NOTAL), THE MAURITANIANS ARE DOING THEIR BEST TO AVOID AN OPEN DISPUTE WITH THE SOVIETS, AND WERE MOSCOW TO COME OUT STRONGLY AGAINST THE PROPOSED PEACEKEEPING FORCE, THE MAURITANIANS WOULD PRESUMABLY BE MORE RELUCTANT TO BECOME DIRECTLY INVILVED IN IT.

6. ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, THE MAURITANIAN LEADERSHIP FACES THE CHARGE THAT IT HAS BITTEN OFF MORE THAN IT CAN CHEW IN THE SAHARA CONFLICT. FURTHER MILITARY INVOLVEMENT ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA MIGHT BE VIEWED HERE AS COMPOUNDING THE INITIAL MISTAKCE. ALSO, DESPITE THE IMPROVED MILITARY SITUATION IN THE SAHARA, THE MAURITANIAN ARMY IS ALREADY STRAINED BY THE

WAR, AND GIVING IT ANOTHER MISSION, HOWEVER SMALL, AT THIS
JUNCTURE MIGHT BE CONSIDERED UNWISE FROM A PURELY MILITARY
STANDPOINT.

7. ON BALANCE, WE ARE CERTAIN THAT MAURITANIA WOULD GIVE A
SHABA OPERATION THE SORT OF "PRIVATE" SUPPORT MENTIONED IN
KING HASSAS'S INTERVIEW. PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT BY THE LEADERSHIP
OF SUCH A MOVE WOULD DEPEND ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT WAS
SANCTIONED BY THE OAU, AND A MAURITANIAN MILITARY CONTRIBUTION
WOULD IN ANY CASE BE NO MORE THAN TOKEN. DUNBAR

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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